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Historical New Orleans

(In Verse)



By



Rixford J. Lincoln.

Feb
1912

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LEE STATUE.

Above the circle o'er the city vast
Stands high the statue of the immortal Lee.
His noble soldier form in bronze there cast,
Commanding still for everyone to see.

His figure tall doth rise unto the sky,
With folded arms he scans the scene about,
As tho' his sturdy spirit could not die,
And still he waited for the battle shout.

In Hall of Fame he will now brightly shine,
The Southern people will e'er love him well,
And place him with the heroes gone, divine,
While his immortal name no force can quell.

He stands to guard this city of the South.
Whose skies so blue bend down o'er him in love.
His name breathes e'en on babies' lisping mouth.
His deeds and fame are writ in realms above.

HALLOWEEN.

'Tis Halloween—the loved one comes to-night;
Be still and watch while through the open door
Her spirit softly glides as once of yore,
And with a measured step she walks the floor.
No light within the silent, vacant room
Save where the moonbeams through the window steal,
And o'er the empty chair her shadow falls
While stooping by the fire her way to feel.
She rests not there, but with a sigh moves on,
For it is long since she was here—a year;
And tho' a smile of Heaven's on her face,
Yet in her radiant eye there gleams a tear.
She wends her way to ev'ry room she knew,
Just for a little glance at those she loves;
Each sleeping face she marks with one sweet kiss
That rests in slumber there like gentle doves.
Perhaps some there remember her no more.
But, ah! there must be hearts that yet are true;
For dead souls ne'er forget their earthly kind,
But hold them dearer whom in life they knew.
And God in mercy sends these souls to earth
To scatter brilliance from the singing stars,
That they might bring His hallow'd touch again
To us below from Heaven's loosen'd bars.
Thus while we pray to-night for lov'd ones gone
Their spirits hover tenderly around,
And near us in the darkness they will stand
While whisp'ring mem'ries in sweet, nameless sound.

CARNIVAL RHYMES.

Come, Pierrot, and shake thyself from sleep,
For Carnival has roll'd around again;
The scent of Spring is on the balmy air,
And Columbine can surely not complain.

Be merry, boy, and sing your sweetest song ,
While Mignonette is peeping there so shy.
Now Jocko with his cap and jingling bells,
To none his fun and frolic will deny.

The elf of Mischief lurks beneath the mask,
And paint and tinsel throw a glamour 'round,
The ancient spirit of dear Mardi Gras
Rises in his magic from the very ground.

So frolic like spoilt children while you may,
For Carnival, it comes but once a year;
To-day the dance, the song and masquerade—
To-morrow, vain regrets—the sigh and tear.

MARDI GRAS.

The banners gayly wave 'mid loud huzzahs,
The King, the King! the people shout to greet;
He comes, he's here to rule this city vast,
While faithful subjects throng on ev'ry street.

Now glist'ning tinsel glistens in the sun,
The maskers dance upon the moving float,
And fairy visions from the artist's brain
Flit by too quick upon their charms to dote.

In grandeur, held aloft by Beauty's hand,
The masquerade in strangest garb holds sway;
The panorama of the pageant bright,
With blazing torch and music fades away.

The pomp, the wealth, the loveliness now goes,
The tingling tunes of Mardi Gras die down.
The mad disguise and revels gay then cease,
The merry King removes his gilded crown.

The blushing cheeks of maidens sweet grow pale,
Relinquish'd now the dance for fast and prayer,
And Satan sits despondent in the dark.
But broken hearts the world can ne'er repair.

LINES ON THE URSULINE CONVENT AND CHAPEL

(MAY, 1908).

Where peacefully the running river flows,
Whose waves splash on the levee banks all day,
The Ursuline's old Convent rises there,
Where cloistered nuns, in patience, teach and pray.
There shady gardens peep beyond the fence,
Where saintly Sisters, with their charges stray,
To breathe the air so pure, from classroom free,
Or in the silence, sweet, their chaplet say.
There, e'er secure from worldly pleasure's taint,
Our daughters learn all that is purest, best,
And find solace in the murmur'ing stream,
That ever sings a holy song of rest.
But fairer, grander than the Convent great,
The chapel nestles near the olden wall,
Where in its quaint, but lovely, portals blest,
Its bells to mass and pray'r the faithful call.
Within its chancel rails, so soft and pure,
Our Lady of Prompt Succor's statue fair
Upon an altar stands with jewel'd crown,
And in her arms doth Jesus beckon there.
'Tis she, invok'd by faithful pray'r, did save
This city proud from desolation vast;
And on the walls, in token of her might,
For favors granted, are ex-votos cast.
Ah! Here, in holy peace, 'tis sweet to pray,
Where Mary watches by the slum'bring stream;
'Tis there she guards her children from all harm,
Where e'er her face, in smiling grace doth beam.
Ah! Here's no sound from out the busy world,
For here, but sighing breezes whisper sweet;
The river tells its wondrous story o'er,
And birds in song, the stranger's ear will greet.
Then linger in the chapel's sacred shade,
And lisp an Ave, Mary will then hear;
While flickers soft the sanctuary lamp,
Which from our hearts will banish sin and fear.
Ah! Oft have weary souls found here relief,
With Christ and his dear Mother list'ning there,
To secrets, griefs and trials which none may know,
But God and Mary, who dispel all care.
Then gather flowers fair and bring them here,
To lay them in the Maytime at her feet;
Come here and kneel before the altar rail,
Where Jesus loves to honor Mary sweet.
Sweet spot, in memory will you ever shine,
Where Mississippi echoes on the shore;
And Mary's praise is carried by the waves,
Which strive her love to sing forevermore.

DEDICATION OF MARQUETTE HALL.

(Sunday ,Nov. 13, 1910.)

Marquette! What mem'ries in his saintly name,
Th' explorer priest, who found a mighty stream,
Whose surging waters soon would spell his name,
And open to the world a land of dream!

'Twas he who made the Mississippi Valley vast,
A country drawing millions to its breast,
Where first his lonely, weary steps were cast,
Within tis forest solitude to rest.

And now, the Mississippi Valley green,
Teems forth in wealth and plenty from its soil;
Where farms and cities great and fine are seen,
And God's sweet sun doth bless the workman's toil.

His deeds, his labors and his holy life,
Are blazed on Louisiana hist'ry's page;
Well known his patient toil 'mid bloody strife,
Which stands majestic on the world's great stage.

And now, in New Orleans, this city proud,
A stately building rises in his name,
Where Truth and Faith will speak in voices loud,
The youth of all the South to ever claim.

Here, Christ leads Education by the hand
To plant the seeds of Faith in souls still young;
To fashion hearts to God's own purpose grand,
And Error from his teachings is here wrung.

Marquette will shine emblazon'ed on this wall,
To gather forth our sons to battle strong,
Where all the world may hear the clear-cut call,
Of sweet Religion crushing out the wrong.

This edifice will make the Cath'lics rise,
To honor and support a school so grand,
Where loud Te-Deums will soon fill the skies
And send its echoes through this mighty land.

Then pray that God will bless this work of zeal
Where tireless Jesuits daily toil and teach,
That all their precious influence may feel
The spirit true in ev'ry man to reach.

LINES TO THE CABILDO.

(Read at the Celebration of Transfer of Louisiana
from France to the United States.)

"O noble pile! Where history wrought its deeds
Withstanding all these years the touch of time;
Within thy walls, proud sons of France once sat,
And signed their lands to men of stranger clime.

"The spirit true of heroes once so great,
Of royal princes and their court so gay,
Still hovers here, where justice calmly rules
And draws her folds across the crumbling clay.

"To-day we celebrate great Freedom's birth;
When Louisiana by this nation bought,
Became the brightest star among the States,
And has since then continuous glory wrought.

"What stirring scenes were acted on this spot,
When mid the clang of arms and banners bright,
The Sieurs of France gave up the land they loved,
And sailed for home, forever lost to sight.

"The name of Jefferson recalls the past.
This State to wealth and fame hath quickly grown;
Whilst through its territory, fertile, vast,
The Mississippi, peerless, grand, hath flown.

Then let us live in prosp'rous peace and love,
Redound still more to Louisiana's fame,
And from the old Cathedral's sacred bells,
There'll peal for aye an anthem to her name."

WHERE THE BAYOU FLOWS.

Where the bayou softly, softly, slowly flows,
And the mocking bird all day doth sing,
Where the sunlight mimic shadows throws,
There I love to tune my harp's wild string.
There quaint visions from each wave will rise,
And will haunt me with bewitching grace.
There sweet thoughts will greet me in surprise,
Whispering echoes of a by-gone race.
There the silence curbs my heart's fierce fire,
Spreading wings of peace upon the air;
And thrice purer grows my soul's desire,
As it struggles with a half-shaped prayer.
There the light doth mingle with the shade,
Like our joys and sorrows on life's way,
Here the birds and fish are ne'er afraid,
For with nature, they share freedom's sway.
Here the sunset in her pride doth fall,
Glorifying this bright, hallow'd spot.
Here the bright fond lovers soon will call,
To bind them with sweet forget-me-not.

CONGO SQUARE (NOW BEAUREGARD).

Long, long ago, before the city spread
Across the ramparts, far about the town,
Was Congo Square famed for many sights,
Which caused it to enjoy quite strange renown.

For here, when Spanish rule did flourish high,
Where bloody bull fights fierce held on this ground;
There rode the heroes in their glory clad,
While cries of triumph loudly did resound.

When France again had claimed her own from Spain,
When slavery, with its evil deeds, held sway,
The awful voodooos oft danced in the square,
Mid shades of night until dawn of day.

In secret places were their charms there hid,
With which to work from friends their fearful spell;
For superstition filled the place with dread,
And in its shadows their dark queen did dwell.

And e'en it is said somewhere within the park
A strangler had his strange abode quite long,
Who kill'd his victims in the stilly night,
And buried them in pits to hide his wrong.

And now the bull fights, voodooos, are no more,
The strangler's but a myth of distant past;
The square in modern beauty stands in pride,
Where soothing shade its graceful trees now cast.

The rush of cars has chased away its ghosts,
The sound of traffic drowns the voodoo's song;
While birds and flowers breathe enchantment there,
And sunshine leads one in its walks along.

THE VIEUX CARRE.

It is the "vieux carre" in Creole town,
Where first the Sieurs of France in grandeur dwelt,
But now a relic of the golden days,

Where beauty, wealth and fame in gold were spelt.
It is the hallow'd spot of sweet Romance,
Where ladies fair stepp'd in the graceful dance,
When Cavaliers wooed 'neath the Southern sky,
And fell enraptur'd at the Creole's glance.

It is the place where saintly bishops ruled,
And stood beneath the old Cathedral spire,
Within whose walls once mingled France with Spain,
And buried lie there many noble sire.

In Jackson Square, close to the river's front,
"Old Hickory" astride his horse doth stand,
And watches by Cabildo old and gray,
Where Justice holds her scales with firmest hand.

Round Bourbon, Royal, even Chartres Street.
The antique shops with relics quaint and rare,
The stranger lure, to buy some heirloom rich,
Sweet relics of noblesse, once grand and fair.

And further down, near Esplanade so proud,
The oldest spot, the Bishop's home you reach;
It stands memento sacred of the past,
Where first, the saintly Ursulines did teach.

So thus, the river's course you follow now,
Past mighty sheds and docks along the stream;
You wander down to Chalmette's battlefield,
Far, far away from city of a dream.

And long, the narrow streets of vieux carre,
Will haunt you with their strange, bewild'ring air;
Then all its beauties linger like a charm,
In mem'ry's spell-bound garden, fragrant, fair.

THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS, JAN. 8, 1815.

(A monument was erected at Chalmette, the place of this battle).

This day of days with pride we celebrate,
When British strength fell fast on freedom's soil,
And God of War sealed Louisiana's fate,
While redcoats 'fore great Jackson did recoil.

The Battle of New Orleans stands alone,
A marvel how a handful could withstand
The fearful shock of English grit and bone,
When led and guided by a master hand.

All honor, glory, be to Jackson brave,
Who swept his fires fierce with shot and shell;
Whose forces, vict'ry won on land and wave,
And bravely marched to very mouth of hell.

But heaven heard from sacred convent wall,
The prayers of Ursula's pure daughters fair;
And God of might did hear his children call,
From carnage wild, their lives He then would spare.

Within Cathedral old the hero went
On bended knee to thank his Lord above,
Who to his people, vict'ry quickly sent,
Whom God's sweet mother did so dearly love.

And faithful hands a shaft have reared on high,
To honor those brave ones, who nobly fell.
While breezes sing their requiem from the sky,
And Southland marks their graves with immortelle.

THE FRENCH OPERA HOUSE.

Here stands the Opera House in all its age,
In gray, but still majestic splendor cast,
Where artists of renown sang on its stage,
Whose walls re-echo glories of the past.
And here have Verdi, Donizetti, Meyerbeer,
Delighted crowds within this temple grand,
When music's notes bring both applause and tear.
Thrilled into life at wave of maestro's hand.
Here, in the glitt'ring horseshoe's boxes long,
The debutante, the Creole beauty rare,
Sits like a queen amid the buzzing throng.
Where cavaliers pay court to ladies fair.
What memories float all about the place,
Where oft the social world reigns quite supreme.
When beauty fills each chair with charming grace
And makes the scene but a dazzling dream!
Here, too, doth Carnival hold yearly court,
When mystic tableaux greet one at the ball,
Where glide fantastic spirits in their sport,
And to the dance and favor fair ones call.
How silent now its walls so old and gray.
But soon will song awaken them from sleep,
When music sounds upon the air so gay.
And Orpheus will break the silence deep.
Here love and all its joys of sweet romance
Make heart of youth and maiden faster beat.
While music lovers sit as in a trance,
To dream again the days of dancing feet.

THE QUADROON BALLROOM.

(This place is now occupied by Colored Sisters—St.
John Berchman's Convent.)

Where 'fore the war, in days of glory old,
When wealth and fashion set the paces high,
When morals and strange customs held their code,
The quadroon girl made white men dance and sigh.
The half-white woman was a creature strange,
A petted, fawning thing, of love and sin.
Her beauty was a dream surpassing rare,
Whose charms their masters oft' in fight did win.
And proud, these girls were petted darlings fair,
Whose sight the grand dames did then hate and fear;
For in their ballroom vast were revels held,
Which brought the blush of shame and bitter tear.
There Folly led the dance in madness wild,
When rivals, 'neath the oaks would often meet,
In duel there, to place their lives at stake,
Because they found a quadroon girl so sweet.
There flash'd the quadroon's eyes so soft and bright,
As on she flew, voluptuous in the dance;
There breathed her lang'rous beauty, wondrous, warm,
With sighs and words, the white man to entrance.
But now, where sin and folly once did reign,
A holy silence rests on cloister wall;
And noble colored Sisters lift their race,
The quadroon girls, who long in sin did fall.
The orphan and the poor of that sad race
Find shelter there with God and holy rest;
The ignorant are taught and led from harm,
Where Christ shall lead them to his kingdom blest.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE—(ROYAL STREET).

Pass quickly by, for it is a haunted place,
And from within is often heard a cry,
While down the steps is heard the swish of lace
Of one who let her slaves in torture die.

The house is dark within and gloom without,
While chains are heard oft rattling in the night;
A sick, forbidding air hangs thereabout,
The sun scarce penetrates it with its light.

'Tis said a woman beautiful and fair,
Whose wealth and grace were then of great renown,
Her slaves beat daily in her palace there.
Until at point of arms she left the town.

And in the dungeon's depth so dark with gloom,
They found some skeletons bound fast by chain,
While blood oft stained the flooring of the room,
Where starving wretches died in wounds and pain.

Long did the people speak of this in fright,
And none dared the house to occupy,
But finally, the place made clean and bright,
Now smiles for thirsty spirits, 'neath the sky.

THE MISSISSIPPI.

O mighty river, rushing to the sea,
Whose swift, far-reaching waters sweep along,
And carry divers craft upon thy breast,
Whilst ever rises from thy depth a song!
Thou girdest in thy yellow arms so strong
Proud cities, towns, the treasures of the South.
And bear away the fruit of harvest fields,
Which float upon thy broad and yawning mouth.
Thy current turbulent, oft shows its wrath,
And then again, in dreamy peace, will rest,
While soft, seductive breezes lull thy sleep,
And sport in playfulness upon thy breast.
A mighty power thou dost surely wield,
Withholding thy dire flood within thy hand,
Whose force no puny man could e'er resist,
Or wealth and life of cities then withstand.
And yet we love thy flowing waters well,
O'er which the sunlit skies so blandly smile;
Across thy waves magnolia perfume floats,
And, wooing thee, thy love doth fond beguile.
Thou'st seen the pomp of Southland in her prime,
And heard the awful roar and boom of war;
Sweet Love and Romance play'd too at thy feet,
While glory glitter'd 'neath fair moon and star.
Then run, run on forever on thy way,
With God's dear benison to kiss thy face;
For time and tide are but to thee as naught.
While thou dost follow blindly in thy race.

TO THE NEW COURTHOUSE.

Behold! The Courthouse portals open wide,
Where Justice stands, in marble clad, ornate;
Judges, thron'd with dignity preside,
To weigh within the balance all men's fate.
This building stately rises in its pride,
Where Advocates their cases, patient, try,
Where Law's strong arm to none is e'er denied,
And Mercy hushes ev'ry sufferers cry.
'Tis here, the widows, orphans, claim their right,
And Judgment frowns on sin and vice and wrong;
'Tis here that Justice sheds her fearless light,
And rises high, her pure and noble song.
A ceaseless tide within these walls shall flow.
A line of men from ev'ry walk of life,
Where passions throb like trees that stormy blow,
As wages hard and fast the bitter strife.
But Justice, cold, triumphant, rules aloft,
Unmov'd by tears or eloquence or guile,
While from the river breezes whisper soft,
And Fate, like Sentinel, lets fall a smile.
May long this temple grand our city grace,
While Progress onward moves with rapid stride;
Within these halls, great battles shall take place,
While Heaven's blessings fall on ev'ry side.

1001

THE ABSINTHE HOUSE.

'Tis here the fearful pirate chief, Lafitte,
Oft came to quaff his wine in days of old,
Where all the great men, statesmen of the day,
Did congregate to chat, with swagger bold.
Within these tell-tale walls did gossip flow,
And plots were hatch'd and secrets great were told;
'Mid smoking pipes and rattling glasses loud
The men of Creole town here spent their gold.
The gallant coxcombs and the silly youths
Here, too, did toast in song the ladies fair,
While absinthe poured its green adown their throats,
To dull the senses from all carping care.
Ah! All those days of glory have now gone—
Each townsman, celebrated at that time,
Has pass'd beyond, now known in name alone.
Tho' yet perchance, his name may live in rhyme.
But yet the abinthe flows as green as old,
And still the glasses clink behind the bar;
The ghosts of other days now whisper 'round,
Again recounting tales of love and war.
But all the glory of the place has fled—
'Tis but a shadow of its former self;
The forms of great men flit around no more,
And it but stands, a prey to game and pelf.

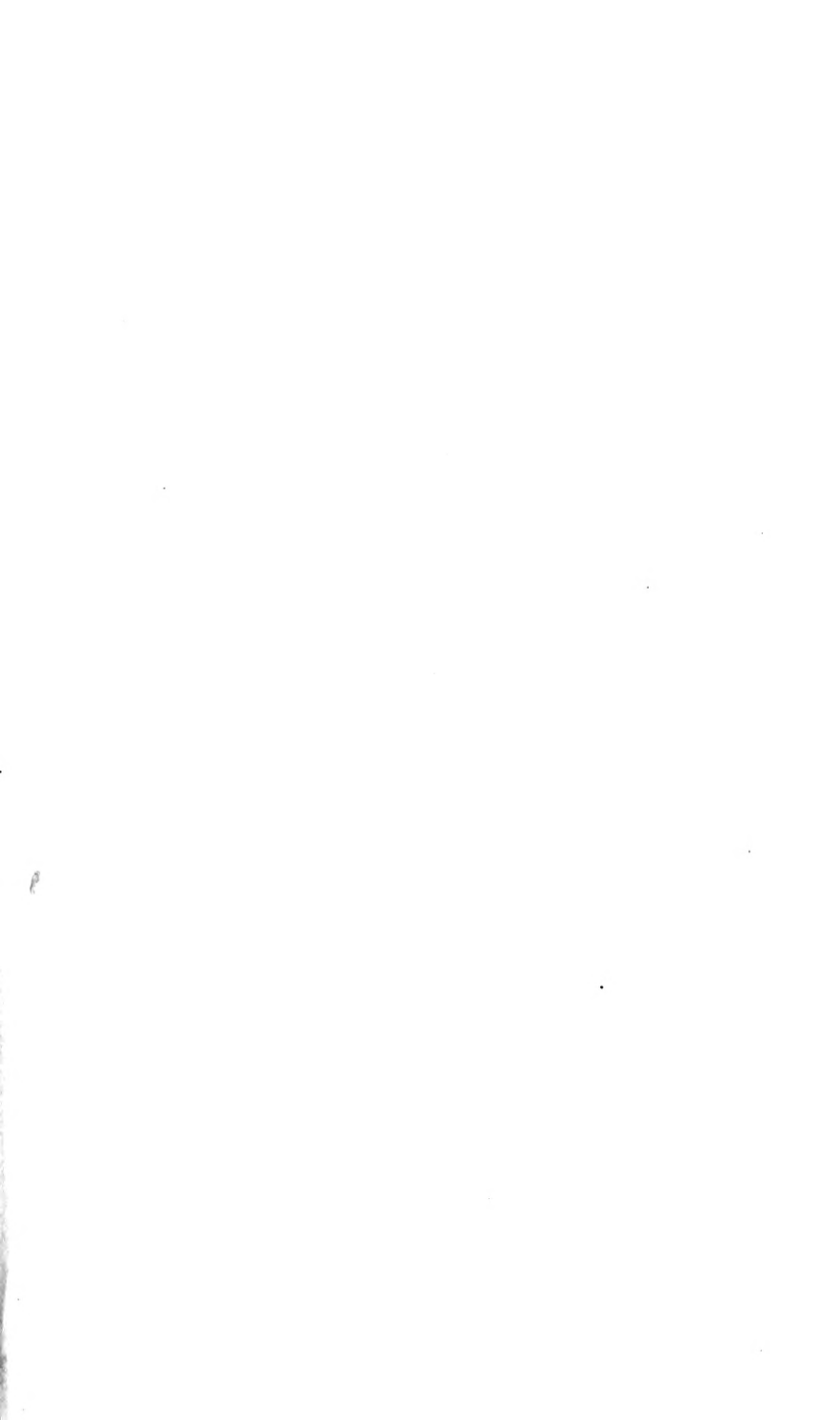
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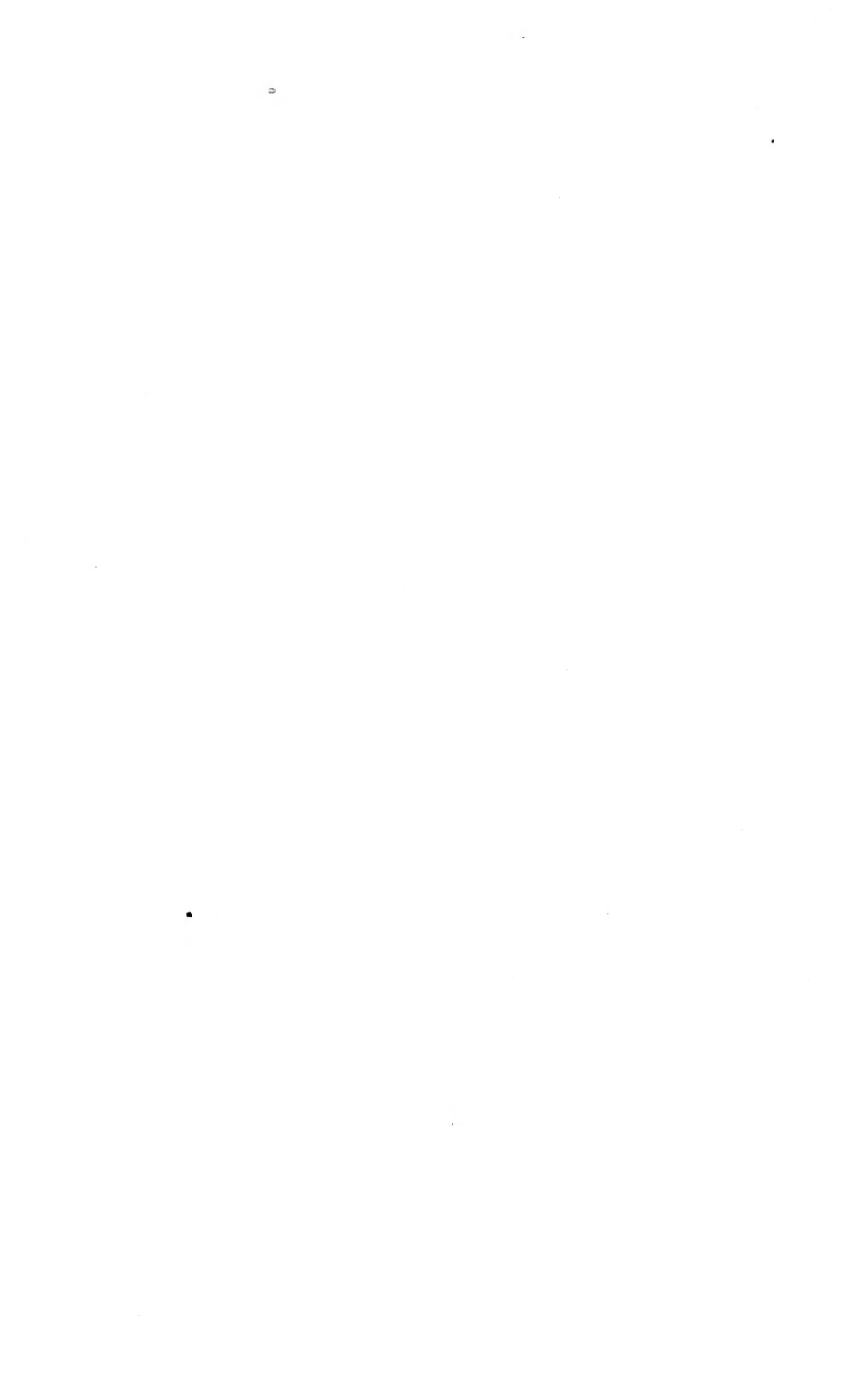
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